

CANADIAN ART



OTTAWA

VOL. IX NO. 3

SPRING 1952

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Plate: *Courtesy, Studio, London*

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One of the contemporary Eskimo carvings collected in the Canadian Arctic by James A. Houston for the Canadian Handicrafts Guild.

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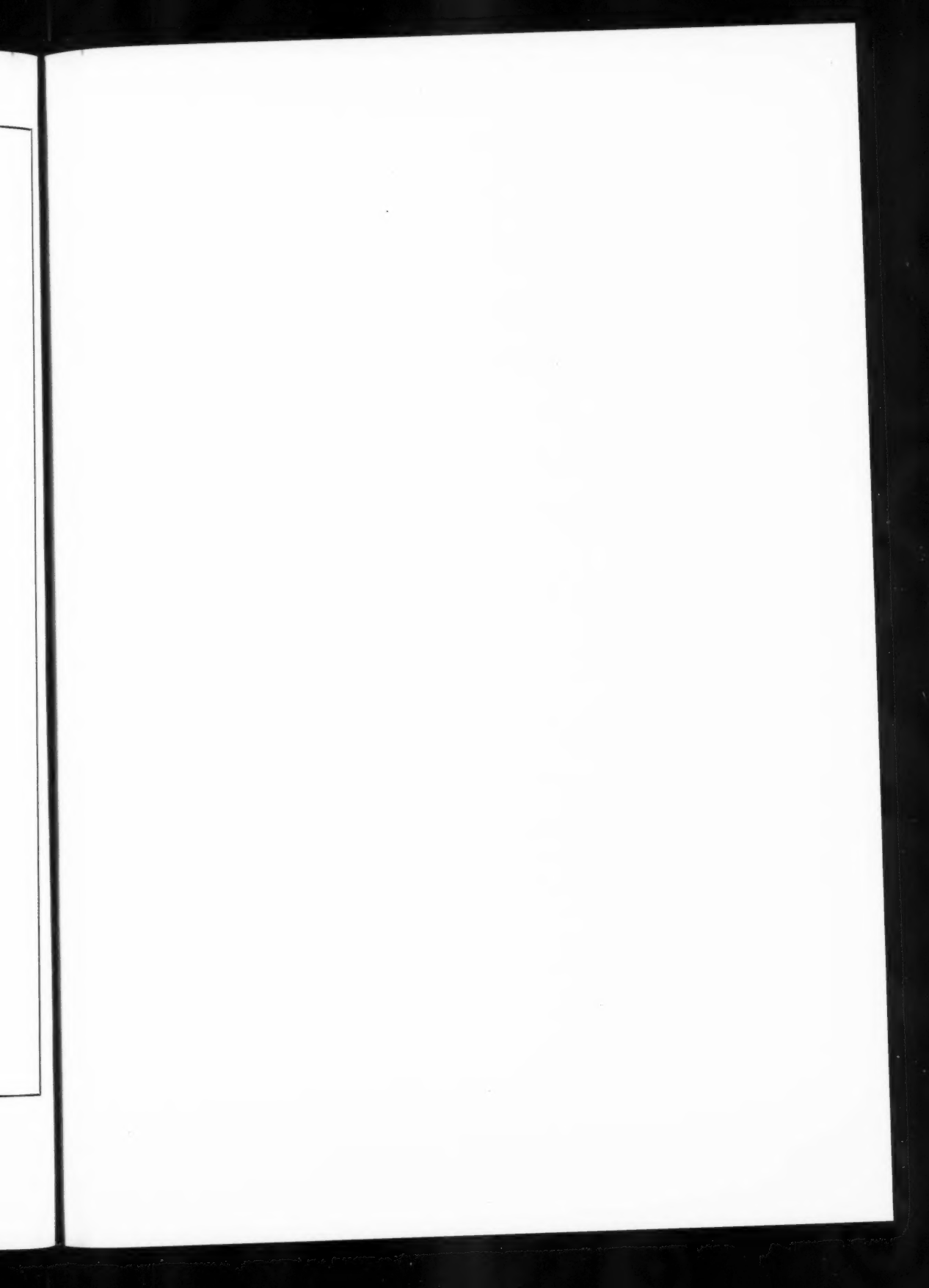
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"SCOTTIE" WILSON. *Pinnacles*. Coloured ink

Collection: Douglas Duncan

The Story Behind Our Cover

Toronto, which recently did honour to Grandma Moses, has for the most part forgotten its own primitive painter, "Scottie",—that is, Scottie Wilson, a former second-hand goods and curio dealer of Yonge Street whose art has now attracted considerable attention in England.

Scottie made his first drawings during the depression years of the thirties in the back room of his shop in Toronto. But it was a long time before his work was heard of in that city. The first artist to make friends with him was Rudy Renzius, the wood-carver and designer in pewter. In 1935 Scottie showed him some small but highly imaginative drawings of fantastic many-eyed creatures; he was trying, he said, "to put his dreams on paper".

Of Scottie's early life we know little, except that he had been a soldier in South Africa and in India and he had come to Canada after leaving the army in 1912. He had made a few drawings but it is doubtful if he had done any serious work in colour before Renzius met him. But, when Renzius urged him to concentrate on painting, he took this advice so seriously that in the winter of 1942 he closed his business and decided to go into seclusion to devote full time to his art. But unlike Gauguin, the Parisian stockbroker turned artist, who went to tropical Tahiti in search of a suitable environment, Scottie went instead to Winnipeg in below zero weather! There he hired a steam-heated room and painted constantly for months.

Douglas Duncan of the Picture Loan Society in Toronto gave him his first recognition with two one-man exhibitions, and sold enough of his work to enable him to make his way to England about 1946.

When he went to Europe, he took his memories of his dreams with him. A convolculus of shapes and those many, many eyes still haunt him. As for his fame, his sudden emergence on the artistic horizon of London has been noted by Evelyn Waugh who, in his best-selling novel, *The Loved One*, has one of his characters petulantly exclaim: "Kierkegaard, Kafka, Cinnolly, Compton-Burnett, Sartre, "Scottie" Wilson. Who are they? What do they want?"

Your Child is an Artist

WYNONA MULCASTER

"MY CHILD is no artist", is the comment made by too many parents, who are convinced that what they say is true. As a matter of fact it is nonsense. Every normal child is a child artist. Actually what the parent is trying to say is: "My child cannot paint adult pictures." Of course he cannot, and no one should expect him to nor should any excuse be necessary. But instead of regretting that our ten-year-olds cannot express themselves in an adult way, let us learn to value what they can do. They can express themselves in a ten-year-old way if they are encouraged to do so. This means that adults must learn from children if they are to understand and enjoy the child's language. Only in an atmosphere of understanding can children produce the child art that is so satisfying to them and a delight to adults.

Many children never discover their own ability to draw or paint just because they have grown up with the feeling that you have to be "gifted" for that sort of thing. Where adults have tended to set a standard of "correct" drawing and painting, which is foreign to child expression, the average child has given it up as hopeless. He couldn't win. When he was six, adults smiled kindly upon his drawing and immediately set about trying to help him to improve. They told him that he ought not to make his train bigger than the station, and that he should not show the policeman's toes inside his boots because you could not really see them. He could not explain that he was not interested in showing the visual appearance of things, but that he was trying to share his feelings and his experience. He did not know that he had made the train bigger than the station because it was more important. He did not know that this was right for him, and he tried to understand the adult who was helping him to improve, but it did not make much sense to him. He began to lose faith in his own ideas and rather than risk being wrong again he sought refuge in copying the teacher's "stick man", or tracing a bunny out of his arithmetic book. This was safe. By the time he was nine our unfortunate average child knew that you had to be "gifted" to gain approval in art and he had given it up as hopeless.

Such occurrences are very sad, and they have happened too often. And why did they happen? Because adults were not content to accept a six-year-old expression from a six-year-old, for they did not know that when he was seven his art would be that of a seven-year-old, and that when he was ten, and twelve, and fourteen, his art expression would mature with him.

Arthur Lismer pleads the need for adult understanding when he says: "We should help children to have the courage to be children while they are children." This, of course, presupposes that the adult will recognize honest child expression when he sees it and



will help the child to feel proud of his own child effort.

Child art, which is as natural to the child as speech, starts in infancy at a primitive level and it grows and changes as the child matures. Before the child can talk he must babble, and the proud parent smiles encouragement as the infant explores each new sound. We would be shocked indeed to hear a mother say to her child: "Don't make those silly noises, Johnny, wait till you can say something sensible!" Before the child can draw recognizable things he must scribble. At about eighteen months of age the average child starts to scribble, if he gets the chance. The urge is so strong that if he is not given a large piece of paper he will scribble on the wall. He needs to scribble, but it is all too common to hear mother announce in firm tones that all pencils and crayons must be kept well out of reach until Johnny gets a little older. The understanding parent will provide paper in big sheets and frequent opportunities for scribbling. The child's scribbling will change as he explores different movements, and one

day, at around three years of age or perhaps four, he will begin to give names to his scribbles. This one is Mummy, that is Daddy, and so on. He has begun to associate storytelling with his scribbles. Shortly after this he will begin to make tadpole-like figures, all head and feet, and these will be repeated for Mummy and Daddy. By the time he is five or six, his drawings of people will have head, body, arms and legs, and the change from disordered scribbling to well-ordered symbols for people will come about without any adult teaching, as a natural reflection of his growth and understanding. All he needs is encouragement and a black crayon and a large piece of paper. As he matures his drawings mature with him. They are a part of him, and the things that are important to him will be important in his drawings.

As a rule adults are fairly willing to accept the primitive symbols of the six and the seven-year-old, but by the time the child reaches nine or ten their ready acceptance has often given way to concern for "improvement". Too many parents and teachers are over anxious to help the child with little stunts and tricks which will give his work that ready appeal to the adult eye. They tend to forget that the satisfaction which the child found in his early work was in part the result of his very real struggle to make his train sit down on the tracks and to make Daddy as he wanted him in his picture. We can destroy much of the satisfaction by making it too easy for him. As soon as we give him a formula to follow he has ceased to tell us what he thinks and the whole thing loses importance for him. The teacher's job is not to do his thinking for him but to stimulate him to do his own best thinking with initiative and with courage. Only then does art become a truly vital experience for the child, through which he actually comes to grips with his own environment, crystallizes his own thinking and makes his own decisions.

There was a time when the critics of modern methods of art education claimed that creative art was soft and undisciplined, for children were encouraged to put down any old thing and whatever they did was acceptable. Now we know that the very reverse is true. Today





From Four to Nine

Wynona Mulcaster makes these comments on the drawings by Saskatoon children reproduced here. Opposite page: A drawing by a four-year-old who tells of bringing in a Christmas tree. The figure at left is herself. (Perhaps she had cold feet!) On the right is her brother. Above: A nine-year-old with an interest in dancing drew this which she called "Fairies Dancing". She is at the age where she is beginning to observe and is pleased to show us that her fairies bend at the knee. Right: This description of "Waiting for the Bus" is also by a nine-year-old. He is struggling with a three-dimensional problem. In simple direct terms he has told us more than most amateur adult artists.



we face a child with a large sheet of paper, build up his enthusiasms and get him to visualize and recall some real or imagined experience, and then we challenge him to organize his thoughts and put them down in visual form. We demand of him the most intense self-discipline and power of decision as he comes to grips with his problems. Compare this with the easy softness of yesterday when he was merely required to copy a picture or imitate a collection of cubes and cones. This required no organizing of thoughts, no decisions. The thinking had been pretty well done for him, and he merely repeated.

Because art is the child's opportunity to crystallize his thinking about his environment and to bring his thoughts into an organized visual statement, it must be accepted as a part of general education. There was a time when art in schools merely reached the level of a series of tricky stunts—how to make a bunny out of two circles, how to paint a landscape in three easy stages, and so on. Like parrots, children repeated what they were told and the result was forty little bunnies neatly tacked on the wall. It has taken us some time to recover from the natural criticism that resulted from this type of busy work, for the word art brings memories of dull and useless art periods in the past. It is important that we

now recognize the vital role that art can play in general education. We can no longer afford to neglect the creative growth of children. To face the difficult problems of tomorrow our young people must learn to build and to create as well as to remember. If school does no more than teach him the facts of subject-matter it has filled only a part of its function. The ability to think creatively may well be the greatest need of our day. Let us not measure the worth of our art classes in terms of the pictures produced by children but rather in terms of what the creative experience has meant to children.

It is ridiculous to think that we can ignore creative thinking and creative expression throughout the child's elementary and secondary schooling and still hope to find these qualities in the adult. We should do well to become a little more concerned about what is happening to our Canadian children in this regard. Our six-year-olds paint their world with gusto and it is the rare child who shows a reluctance to tell his story in paint. What about our sixteen-year-olds? They too have potential creative power, but somewhere along the line adults have failed them.

Editor's note: This is an amplification of an article which, in its original form, was written for publication in the Union Farmer of Saskatoon.

"The Farm" by a seventeen-year-old



In Search of Contemporary Eskimo Art

JAMES A. HOUSTON

A SPLENDID art of stone and ivory carving and delicate line engraving, equal to or excelling any native art on this continent, is found among the Eskimos of Canada's eastern Arctic. That these two Eskimo cultural groups, the coastal or seal people and the inland or caribou people, should be so creative is not surprising for they have always shown great ability in all the crafts they undertake.

Their slim kayaks are said to be the most perfectly devised water-craft in the world. Their clothing, made of caribou skins, is well tailored, and unsurpassed for warmth and comfort by any we have yet developed. The seal-oil lamp, the harpoon and fish spear are unique designs perfectly suited to the Eskimo's requirements.

Because the natural resources of the Arctic north of the tree-line are extremely limited by the climate, these people dwelling on the tundra and along the rocky coast line of Hudson Bay and Baffin Island have been forced to use every inventive power and technical skill they possess in order to remain alive.

As the Eskimo's entire life is motivated by a quest for food, and animal fat for heat, in his creative work we see art through the eyes of a hunter. He keenly portrays the other hunters, the animals and objects around him. His expert dissection of game gives him a fine anatomical knowledge of the animals he lives on, and this readily shows in his well proportioned carvings. We also see in his work a reflection of his playfulness and good humour—a quality rarely found in our Indian arts.

The surge of civilization that swept the continent in the past century stamped out many Indian ritualistic tribal arts, and later replaced them with a meaningless souvenir trade. But their geographic remoteness protected the Eskimos, who were by-passed, and the link between past and present in their art is as yet unbroken.

When we ask an Eskimo if he carves art objects (*sinourak*), he replies: "Certainly". In a land where people, whose lives are governed by the hunt, live in small groups of two or



"... a reflection of his playfulness and good humour. . ."

three families, everyone must be able to do everything: make a pair of boots; shape a harpoon; braid a dog-whip; build a kayak; fashion a knife; sing a song; and, of course, create a pleasing object of art.

Kopekolik, an Eskimo from Povungnetuk,



*"There is no
copying of
one another
in this work."*

once brought me a splendidly carved stone walrus, the best I had ever seen. I wanted to know if he would make me another one. He looked at me for a moment and then asked, "Why?" He said, "I have carved a perfect likeness of a walrus. Why would you want me to make another one?" As far as he was concerned he had proved his craftsmanship as a walrus carver and that was the end of it. I then suggested that I had never seen him carve a caribou; he was at once excited by this idea and immediately left to select the stone.

The Eskimo practice of carving is thousands of years old. In the past, and to some extent in the present, the carvings were made as miniature likenesses to bring good fortune in hunting, to be placed in the graves of the dead, to be worn or used as protective amulets, and to serve as toys or games.

The Eskimo still uses his primitive methods in carving. A bow drill is employed to make holes. The ivory mouth-piece steadies the revolving drill shaft while the carver holds the object in his free hand. He attains the

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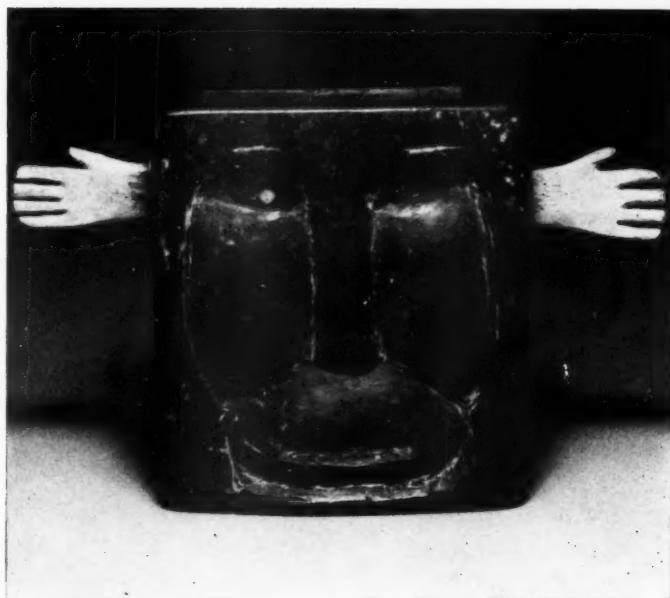
SAMOUTIK

Mask of Death

Below:

PHILIPUSSEE

Naked Giant



carving's smooth shape with a rough stone and stone dust, and its polish by submerging it in seal oil. Later he rubs it to a fine finish with his hands.

Files are now used, but when these are not available, the Eskimo readily returns to the old ways.

The complete adoption of our methods will probably not improve the art of the Eskimos, as their simple tools force them to study the raw materials and best utilize their natural shape. Infinite care and patience are shown. Like the Chinese, they keep their small objects wrapped away, instead of on constant display, until they are passed to a guest for inspection. For this reason, we find all the parts (such as the pads of bears' paws) carefully carved in detail.

The Eskimo never has wasted his energies on warfare, and the climate demands that he spend a considerable amount of his time inside his home. Thus, he has had the opportunity to perfect his art.

Of course, I had no knowledge of this when



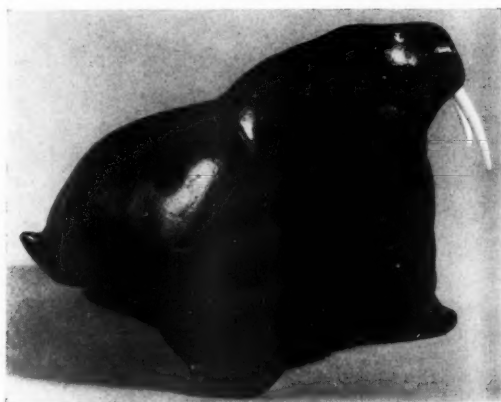
*"You can feel
the excitement . . ."*

I first visited the Arctic in 1948. But my thoughts were filled with the north, and I had long had a desire to draw the Eskimo in his true surroundings. I boarded a train in August which took me as far as the rails would carry me—to Moosonee on the southern tip of James Bay. There I had the outrageous good luck to be offered a plane trip to Port Harrison and Povungnetuk on the east coast of Hudson Bay.

I had the best time imaginable. The Eskimo carver is inspired with the coming of each new season, and by the migration of game. In

some subtle way it is thought good luck to carve the animal one is about to hunt. You can feel the excitement of the search for walrus, of the seal hunt, of the coming of the geese, of the salmon run in the rivers, by looking at the carvings as they come in. One month there will be an abundance of geese, the next month of walrus, and so on. The fatness or the leanness or the agility of the animal is in each instance depicted with the concentration of a carver whose whole mind is focussed on his future food supply. There is no copying of one another in this work.

*" . . . of the search
for the walrus . . ."*



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"... it is thought good luck to carve the animal one is about to hunt."

A month later I returned south with my drawings; but more important I had some splendid carvings in stone, made by the Eskimos.

The Canadian Handicrafts Guild suggested that I might make a test purchase for them the following summer. The object was to find out whether the Eskimos on the east coast of the Bay could produce carvings in quantity and of a quality that would be saleable.

Once the Eskimos fully understood that we wanted to trade cartridges, tea and so forth, for all their work, they went at this new industry excitedly. They were paid by means of a system of chits through the facilities of the Hudson's Bay Company, and soon the allotment of money was used up.

When a sale of the Eskimo work was held that fall in Montreal it was advertised by the

Guild to last a week; but to our delight, everything was sold out in three days!

The Department of Resources and Development became interested in the project, and asked the Guild to extend its search for such material even further north. They stressed the need for work in areas that were depressed because of a scarcity of game and offered the Guild a small grant to cover my salary and travelling expenses.

Five trips have been made thus far. Points on the east and west coasts of Hudson Bay have been visited. Hudson's Bay Company post managers are continuing to purchase Eskimo handicrafts at those places where I have spent some time on behalf of the Guild.

Over twenty thousand pieces have been brought out, and sold by the Guild to the Canadian public. The supply has not begun to meet the demand.

We are aware of the many pitfalls in the mass production of this type of art. The Guild does not wish greatly to increase the volume, or in any way change the methods Eskimos now use in their carving. We are aware of the Eskimos' proud sense of individualism, and employ the method of purchasing all of their art—paying larger sums for the better work. We are also much interested in children's work and encourage them by purchasing everything they make, even although we are sometimes only able to offer them a

he will put it away carelessly in his parka. Yet not one has ever been lost. And if the price paid is good, he will most certainly have another carving when you next see him.

The work of Eskimo women is an important part of this development. They produce objects of rare design and beauty, utilizing all their skill in needlework and in the blending of furs. In its own way, this work of Eskimo women is unsurpassed in Canada.

In this first step into industry, we find the Canadian Eskimo clever and energetic. He is



KOPEEKOLOK. Owl protecting nest

very small price. This has proved fruitful; for in some cases children of fifteen years, after a few months of practice, turn out work that compares favourably with the adult art.

The good carver is rarely the good hunter in any Eskimo group. The purchase of carvings, therefore, often improves and stimulates whole families—and gives them a new standing in their community.

It is perhaps an interesting insight into Eskimo character that the truly gifted carver, when he brings a piece to trade, will greatly malign his art. He will say that he is a worthless carver, and that nothing should be traded for his work. When the slip is given in trade,

delighted with the opportunity to improve his living (and to avoid the necessity of Government relief) through the creation of art. Over seventy-five per cent of those in any of the groups we have yet met take an active part in producing saleable work. Certainly this is Canada's liveliest art group.

Their recent work has been shown this year at the Royal Ontario Museum and at the National Gallery of Canada. It is our greatest hope that in the future names like Munamee, Akeektashook, Kopeekolok, Tikketuk, Tungeelik, Oshweetuk, and those of many other fine carvers, will be well known to all Canadians.

A Broader Base of Patronage

GEORGE ROBERTSON

"We are compelled to perform certain types of work which are irrelevant to our interest as artists; we are quite unable to live from our art alone."

WITH these words quoted above, Alfred Pellán, speaking to the Royal Commission on Arts, Letters and Sciences, summed up the most crucial problem facing the Canadian artist today, the lack of any art market sufficiently large to support our serious practising painters, sculptors and graphic artists.

We are all familiar with the "certain types of irrelevant work" to which Mr. Pellán referred, teaching, illustrating, commercial art and design, jobs that have little or no actual connection with serious art but which are necessary to supplement an inadequate income from the sale of art works. We are also aware that almost every artist who aspires to a decent living standard must, sooner or later, become involved in some such secondary task.

The questions arise: Why should a country of Canada's population and size be incapable of supporting at least a few of its better artists on a full-time basis? Where and how can a market be created to absorb a higher percentage of our annual art product?

These questions in some form were posed to the Massey Commission by almost every group and individual citizen appearing before it. Unfortunately, the reply in the Massey Report was vague and inconclusive. It recommended in general terms an increase in the National Gallery's annual purchase fund, greater government assistance in the staging of art exhibits across Canada and more public and private commissions of Canadian artists' work.

Certainly, for anyone who anticipated a forthright, concrete plan, designed to fill up the present gaps in the artists' financial picture, the Massey Report was a disappointment. Whatever the fate of the Report in its final implementation, it should be obvious that the government alone will not solve, nor should it be expected to, the major problem of selling enough Canadian art to guarantee some measure of financial independence for the artist.

It is still going to be up to the artist and his various art societies to do the work necessary.

No glib or facile solution is possible. Probably no one realizes fully the amount of strenuous groundwork that is necessary for the establishment of a sound economic framework within which the Canadian artist can work in comparative security. The task of education and information is only a small part. The problem really involves a complete re-orientation of our theories and methods of selling art works to the Canadian public.

Perhaps, in this country, we are undergoing a serious hang-over from the eras not too lately dead when only the rich could afford to or wanted to support the artist; days when the average worker was considered neither discriminating nor affluent enough to be concerned. Unfortunately, we suffer also from the by-product of this concept, the idea that it is slightly vulgar to discuss any work of art in terms of its price. Both attitudes are anachronistic.

As a result of these superstitions, Canadian artists are discovering that the rich are not interested enough, or the interested are not rich enough to make serious art a rewarding pursuit. If we consider the crass business side of art in the light of our present-day society, we may be able to make some profitable adjustments necessary to achieve a practical solution.

In checking the figures for the sales held annually by the Women's Committee of the Art Gallery of Toronto, I made some interesting discoveries.

In the first place, I was astonished to see that during the two weeks devoted each year to the sale, the Women's Committee sell more paintings than all the art society exhibitions combined—shows that run an average of six weeks each.

Two factors are involved here: the average price of each work and the nature of the

ABA BAYEFSKY

*Feeding
the Pigeons*

Dry-point



JACK NICHOLS

Head

Lithograph

Plate: Courtesy, Picture Loan Society

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exhibition. The Women's Committee label their effort, quite honestly, as a "Sale of Canadian Paintings and Sculpture". A visitor to the Gallery is encouraged by the very purpose of the show to consider purchasing at least one of the works on view.

The most revealing figures, however, to come out of the Women's Committee sale are those having to do with price. Over the past four years, the average price has ranged between \$57 and \$63, with works under \$100 comprising at least ninety per cent of the total. While this may seem like nothing more than bargain-basement salesmanship, the purchase of over fifty paintings in two weeks indicates that a large and hitherto neglected section of the public is ready and eager to buy original works of art, if only they can find them in that price range. If you consider these figures in relation to last spring's exhibition of the Ontario Society of Artists where half the paintings were priced at over \$200 and a third at over \$300 you begin to understand one important reason why that society's six-week run netted only 11 sales.

To me, these figures indicate two things very clearly. If the artist is genuinely interested in selling his work and his society in helping him, both must try harder to stress the sales aspect of an exhibition. It is all very well to say that the attendant publicity will encourage the public to arrange for private sales after the exhibition, but, as the artist's dilemma shows, this is obviously not enough. Even more important is the indication that the artist must actively seek a broader base of patronage. It is apparently no longer true (if ever it was) that only our more affluent citizens have the taste or inclination to appreciate good art. The long and arduous struggle of our educators to deepen the interested public's artistic perception will be won to no avail if, having learned to appreciate Canadian art, they cannot afford it.

This does not mean the Canadian artist must or should accept lower prices for his work. It means, rather, that he must produce more for the low-budget buyer: smaller canvases, or less expensive works through reproductive media, for example, lithographs, lino-cuts, dry-points, etchings and so forth. He must

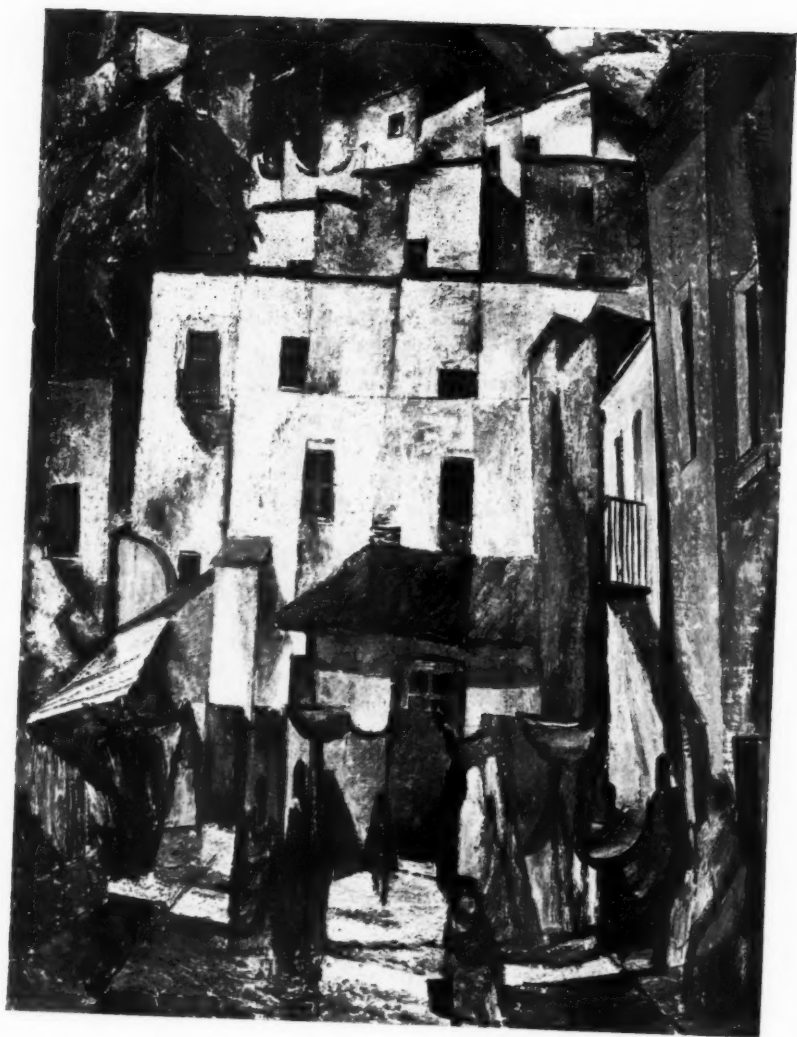
learn the art of producing quality in quantity rather than in size, so that he can realize a good return from his labours and at the same time distribute the product of his talent more widely.

One Toronto artist who has followed this practice with eminent success is Jack Nichols. Two years ago, Nichols held a two-week exhibition of lithographs produced during a visit to California on a Guggenheim fellowship. The works were priced from \$15 to \$30. During the run of his exhibition, he sold enough prints to net what a good average small exhibition might bring any artist. Since then, sales of additional prints have more than doubled his initial return and he has every prospect of continuing sales as long as his supply of prints lasts. Meanwhile, he has created time to devote to major canvases, paintings that only a very few will be able to afford. But unlike many artists, he is not solely dependent upon the sale of his major works to survive as a serious artist.

The only place an artist gains financial prestige is on the wall of a purchaser's home. By whatever means they wish, but by following some constructive plan, the artist and his art society must concentrate upon getting more Canadian art into Canadian homes. There, in a proper domestic setting, it becomes the functional item that people are interested in buying, not just the subject of a critical note in a magazine, newspaper, or on the radio. There it achieves its essential value as a commodity,—essential, that is, if the artist is to live by his art.

We all hope that the implementation of the Massey Report may include some form of concrete help for the Canadian artist. But it would be tragic wishful thinking to presume that this or any subsequent government measure is capable of solving our artists' prime dilemma.

Only by the honest recognition of his position as a producer of consumer goods, only by his acceptance of the responsibilities which this aspect of his work entails, can the Canadian artist hope to emerge as more than a spare-time practitioner. When that day arrives, we can properly expect Canadian art to reach full-fledged maturity.



R. YORK
WILSON

Guanajuato

Retreat in Mexico

— A Canadian Painter Abroad

L. A. C. PANTON

TO THE majority of serious painters in Canada, life is a continuing conflict between the psychological compulsion to paint and the economic compulsion to earn a living. Only a few artists in this country manage successfully to support themselves, much less a family, on the proceeds of their painting alone. Some artists have resigned themselves to these conditions, and satisfy their overriding urge to paint at the cost of comfort and security. All of them depend for their income on a fickle and limited market more often disposed to safe investment in well-advertised names and socially approved styles than to the purchase of art for its own sake and the personal pleasure to be derived from it.

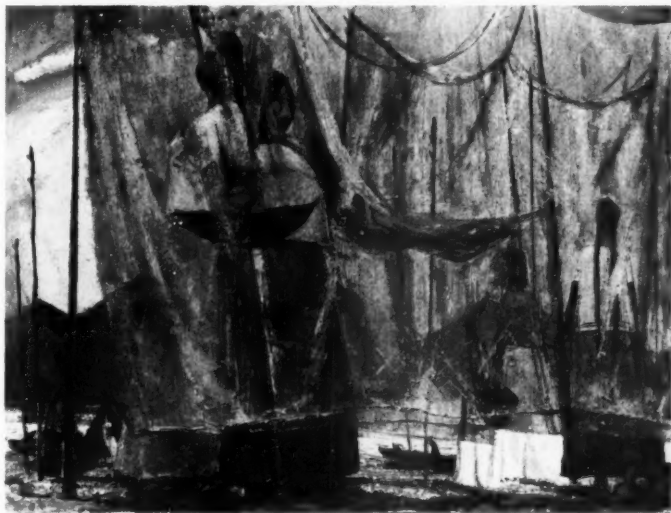
Though the public appetite for good pictures is growing slowly, and is beginning to accept in small quantities work of a more modern and experimental character, the demand is still too small to permit even artists of considerable ability to entrust their livelihood solely to painting.

The artist lives to paint, but he must first live. In making his living, usually as a teacher or commercial artist, he does so, frequently, at the expense of his painting,—in the shortening of the time he can devote to it, in the reducing of the energy he can bring to it, and

in the deadening of his creative powers and the crippling of his skill which are the inevitable results of these restrictions. The artist desperately needs time and quiet, and he must reconcile as best he can the time he wishes to give to his painting and the time he must devote to his earning activities. And, after economic demands have been met, even the short time which remains may be invaded and work interrupted by the inescapable claims of social life in an urban community. In the long run, these adverse conditions tend to sap his zest and to involve him in hopeless frustrations, to the point of extinction.

It was these considerations, in part, which led R. York Wilson to the decision to cut himself loose from all the distractions of a busy life in Toronto, in order to devote his whole time to painting. A brilliant and more than usually successful free-lance advertising designer and illustrator, he had, for several years, enjoyed the generous rewards of his calling. During that time he had become interested in painting as a fine art, an interest which appeared late in his career, but developed so strongly as to become his major activity. He found subject-matter in both landscape and the figure, and painted it in a fresh and dashing style often distinguished by

R. YORK WILSON. *Tarascans and Nets*







R. YORK WILSON. *Toluca Market*

Plate: Courtesy, C.I.V. Ocal, Montreal

an ingenious organization, rich colour, and a strong sense of caricature. These characteristics he had brought with him from his experience as an illustrator, but they soon proved to be no more than serviceable assets. The real problems of the painter lay beyond them. His anxiety to come to close grips with these problems seduced him into relinquishing a lucrative occupation in order to gain time for study and experiment. Since conditions at home denied him sufficient opportunity for the necessary exploration, he decided to go where he could carry on his studies without interruption.

He chose to go to Mexico, which is easily accessible at little expense, where living costs

are low, where the landscape and native life have a romantic attraction for the artist, and where, above all, life is placid and time of no importance. In two visits, totalling the larger part of a year, he settled in San Miguel, a small town remote from the tourist trade, with a few English-speaking people (the Canadian painter, Leonard Brooks and his wife, Reva Brooks, among them), and recognized as an art centre where the artist may live undisturbed with his problems, remote from the complexities and excitements of life at home in Canada. A third trip abroad is in prospect and, by the time this appears in print, Wilson will be on his way to another Shangri-la, in Majorca in the Mediterranean.

R. YORK WILSON. *White Figures of Acambay*



Plate: Courtesy, Journal of the R.A.M.

At first thought, these flights may be regarded as a mere "escape" from the troublesome realities of the painter's function in Canada. Or they may seem to be a search for novelty, as if the artist hoped to find, ready-made, on foreign soil, the artistic wonders he could not create on his own. Many artists have hoped, but failed, to find this pot of gold at the other end of the rainbow. But these reasons, whether of "escape" or quest for the fantastic, are not those which prompt Wilson to leave his homeland. It has been said that the artist cannot shed the traditions and influences that have made him what he is. Wilson is deeply conscious of his Canadian birthright, and of his debt to other artists in his own country. But after long association with them, he feels himself yielding to all the subtle pressures exerted upon him by the art community of which he is a part, and to the temptation to accept the standards approved by important groups of painters and critics. The artist in this country, he believes, finds it difficult, even hazardous, to paint Canada in terms which are not those adopted by others, and almost impossible to remain independent of current modes, their sponsors and supporters.

This is not to suggest that Wilson has no faith in the quality of his own artistic instincts, but it does indicate his suspicion and fear that his art can never be essentially his own, so long as he is conscious of these community pressures. It is imperative for him that he shed those acquired elements which threaten to confuse and inhibit the exercise of his own essential personality. His retreats to Mexico and Majorca, therefore, are not only an escape from powerful influences, but also an opportunity for releasing his own spirit in a fresh start.

Having attained in Mexico the solitude he sought, he settled down to a period of artistic reconstruction. He re-oriented himself, not to the new and strange life around him, but to the new purposes which had taken possession of his mind. Painting was henceforth to be design, and design was to become not a device for merely decorative ends but an instrument of language, a means of stating these ideas which the artist holds to be peculiarly the

province of painting. Representation, for its own sake in any terms, was to be abandoned. Novelties and innovations of caricature or technical bravura, which however startling or ingenious contributed nothing essential to the original purpose, were to be excluded. Statement was to be ascetic, strictly within the limits of plastic design, devoid of spectacular tricks and diverting trivia.

His more recent work in Mexico shows with what tenacity he held to his new creed. To an artist of Wilson's ebullient temperament, such a rigid self-discipline must often have faltered before his appetite for the excitement and exuberance of his earlier paintings. For a time, these appetites were not entirely subdued. But gradually they were subordinated; fundamental objectives were slowly clarified, and emerged in carefully conceived pictorial structures, which have a real, but not a rude, force. Occasionally design is over-emphasized, as if the artist were exulting in his command of a new vocabulary. But in all of his later works there is a thoughtful, even scholarly and sensitive, employment of plastic design as a subtle and expressive language, supported but not submerged by delicate or robust, but always rich, colour and refined drawing. These are the work of a painter-poet who understands and respects the painter's means, and puts them in service to his own feelings with taste and distinction.

During the process of re-assessing his own pictorial objective, Wilson became interested in duco as a painting material. Much important work has been done in Mexico with duco, and its chemistry and the techniques which are appropriate to its use in painting are now well understood. With this information readily available, Wilson proceeded to carry out his new programme in the new medium. The combination was successful, and not only because he was able, later, to master the use of duco; for Wilson is a "fast worker", and the initial difficulties of handling duco imposed on him the need for a more than usually careful consideration of his pictorial ideas. In the end he discovered an affinity between these ideas and his chosen medium, and his latest work shows with what satisfying simplicity this union has been effected.



Plate: Courtesy, Journal of the R.A.I.C.

Ghitta Caiserman — An Expanding Vision

ROBERT AYRE

GHITTA CAISERMAN

Open Window

Opposite page:

Still life

IF you knew Ghitta Caiserman only through her work, you might be surprised to learn that she started out with the idea of being a fashion illustrator. After a few childhood painting lessons with Aleksandre Bercovitch, she went to the Parsons School of Design in New York and did so well that she was

awarded a post-graduate scholarship. But she didn't take it up. It would have committed her and when it came to the sticking point she realized that the idea hadn't been very strong, that it had probably been more her mother's—a dress designer—than her own, and she decided against fashion. Now she looks

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on her experience at the Parsons School as a blank spot in her life. But New York was anything but a blank, for in the evenings she frequented Moses Soyer's studio, working with him and Alexander Dobkin and meeting such stimulating people as Chaim Gross, and she later studied at the Art Students League under Harry Sternberg.

With these influences, it is easy to see why there isn't a trace of fashion glibness in her painting. If it hadn't played such a small part in her life, you might have said that she bent over backwards to avoid it. She likes people, the ordinary people who live in the crowded streets of the big city; she is interested in the way they live and the things they use; she paints, as she says, with love; but she doesn't sentimentalize. She paints plain people in a plain way. At the risk of being misunderstood, I'd say that she prefers prose to poetry, out of a sort of unaffected, almost puritan, honesty. Ghitta Caiserman is not one of those who takes pleasure in paint for its own sake; there is nothing sensuous in her use of colour; she works much in sober tempera; she draws a great deal and, while she is sensitive to texture and tone, when she introduces colour into her lithographs, as she occasionally does, she is sparing and doesn't quite trust herself. Her compositions are notable for their angularities, which sometimes make her figures look self-conscious and unbending, as if they were not at home in the world, or as if she herself were not altogether at her ease.

Perhaps it is difficult to fit humanity into a world of geometrical abstractions and that,

I believe, is what she is trying to do. Picasso has done it and she admires Picasso. He would have been great if only for cubism, she thinks; but he is the greater because he made a social as well as a formal revolution. "I recognize their contribution in terms of the language of painting", she says of non-objective painters, but to her that is not enough. She feels that their divorce from reality was complete when they retreated into their own minds after the first retreat from the world to the studio. As far as it goes, it may be interesting, but to Ghitta Caiserman their work is "a small statement". She cares about severe formal relationships, but she cares about humanity, and so she tries to fit the one into the other, and the uncompromising geometry becomes a symbol.

At first, her interest in humanity impelled her to show up the drab side of life in wordless sermons and allegories, but latterly, while she still refuses to be beguiled by the softer colours and contours, she has been admitting grace. In a world of poor kitchens, narrow staircases, arid back yards and lanes, the rubber plant begins appearing, a concession, a symbol pointing to the landscape she seldom paints. Windows that were once shut are now wide open. With her husband, Alfred Pinsky, himself a painter and teacher, and the printer of her lithographs, she has taken up the recorder and music has brought her a release, a relaxation, which is apparent in her latest work.

Still under thirty, Miss Caiserman has already won considerable recognition. Galleries are beginning to acquire her works. In 1950





GHITTA CAIZERMAN

The Wedding of Samson

One of a series of six lithographs based on the painting of this subject by Rembrandt in Dresden

she was awarded third prize in the O'Keefe Awards for Canadian painting. A few months ago it was announced that she was the Canadian winner of the scholarship given by the Instituto Allende of the University of Guanajuato at San Miguel de Allende, Mexico; she was the unanimous choice of the three judges, Lawren Harris, L. A. C. Panton and Leonard Brooks. She spent six weeks in Mexico with her husband in 1948 and she has travelled in Europe, but she is closely attached to Mon-

treil and at the time this piece was written, in January, she was still disentangling herself so that she could get away for her year's study in San Miguel. She had finished her course of weekly lectures at the Jewish Library on "Turning Points in the History of Painting", but she was still busy teaching art to over one hundred and twenty-five children in four groups, all extracurricular, two classes at one school, one at another, and the fourth at the Young Men's Hebrew Association.

The Paintings of Graham Sutherland

ERIC NEWTON

Graham Sutherland is a modern English master whose work is becoming more and more widely known in Canada. For example, the National Gallery of Canada, the Art Gallery of Toronto and the Vancouver Art Gallery have all now acquired pictures by Sutherland for their collections. To those who wish to understand more fully the background of this painter's genius we offer the following article by Eric Newton, distinguished English art critic and author of The Meaning of Beauty.

GRAHAM Sutherland, who is now in his fiftieth year, is certainly the painter whose name would leap to the mind in answer to the question: "Who is England's most original and most typical painter?" His is also probably the most familiar name among those of British

artists whose work has been exhibited on the continent of Europe. Yet it was only a year or so ago that a representative exhibition of the whole of his work was seen in London. One-man shows, of course, have been held at frequent intervals, and two well-illustrated

books on his paintings have been published—the small but excellently produced volume in the Penguin Modern Painters series in 1943, and the more ambitious book published by the Ambassador Publishing Company, with an introduction by Robert Melville, early in 1951. The latter should be carefully studied by anyone who wishes to test the exact flavour of Graham Sutherland's art. It deals in detail only with his paintings and drawings of the last few years, but those were critical years in Sutherland's development; it was during this period that the artist first visited the

South of France and, without altering the quality of his vision, began to enlarge the range of his subject-matter.

Inside the dust-cover of the book occur the following two sentences: "Graham Sutherland is our most inspired landscape painter since Turner and Constable, and in his brilliant renewal of their specifically English contribution to European art he has achieved international stature. He is probably the only living artist who can be said to have enriched our imaginative perception of nature."

That is no small claim to make, but, though

GRAHAM SUTHERLAND. *Design for Tapestry.* Art Gallery of Toronto





SAMUEL PALMER. *Oak Tree, Shoreham, Kent.*

Pen and ink, water colour and gouache

The National Gallery of Canada

I think the second sentence is unfair to one or two contemporary British landscape painters, the first is largely true and deserves amplification.

I can see no connection, either in style or temperament, between Sutherland and Constable. Constable was essentially an affectionate observer, while Sutherland seems to me to paint with very little affection and to rely very little on observation. Turner, on the other hand, is surely connected with Sutherland in the closest possible way. It is usual to trace Sutherland's artistic ancestry back to Blake and Samuel Palmer; the resemblance between Sutherland's early etchings and Blake's woodcuts for Thornton's edition of Virgil's *Georgics* is quite obvious. But Turner's extraordinary gift for identifying himself with the forces of nature, instead of observing nature, in the manner of Constable, is also Graham Sutherland's gift. It is one of the rarest and most precious gifts an artist can have, and the artist who possesses it can certainly claim to have within himself the seeds of inspiration.

Moreover, an artist who has a kinship with Turner and owes a debt to Blake and Samuel Palmer must share with all three the one quality they all have in common—that of being a visionary. Sutherland is, above all, a visionary painter and everything he has ever done—with the possible exception of his recent and much-debated portrait of Somerset Maugham—has been done in the spirit of a visionary.

That became quite clear in the exhibition of his work in London. The earliest works, the romantic, pastoral etchings, done in the early thirties, are full of those evocative elements—hollow tree trunks, lush foliage, moonlight and black shadows that Samuel Palmer handed on to the later romantics as their stock-in-trade. Later the real Sutherland begins to appear, groping his way towards a new set of shapes, harsher, starker, more tragic, less pastoral and more primeval. Small sketch-books were filled with these gropings; until the end of the thirties Sutherland seems to have been content to work intensely and on

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a small scale, usually without the need of colour. Fragments of gaunt landscape or close-ups of writhing rock or vegetable forms, drawn with great intensity and ever increasing power, mainly discovered in the strange hinterland behind the coast of Pembrokeshire, in South Wales, are his subjects. Towards the end of this period he begins to work on a larger scale and with a range of harsh, evocative colour—blacks and fiery reds and harsh greens and acid yellow-greens.

It was these larger statements that first established his reputation when he held his first one-man show in London in 1938. And it was not surprising that, on the outbreak of World War II, he was chosen as one of the official war artists, and commissioned to do a series of drawings of the devastation that resulted from the bombing of London. Plenty of artists tried the same theme and found good material in the tattered picturesqueness of bombed houses; Graham Sutherland alone expressed their crucified tragedy. For he, like his slightly older contemporary, Paul Nash, could endow inanimate objects with human sensitivity and make a tree trunk or a mountain path seem to express a mood of anguish. Later in the war he turned his attention to blast furnaces and slate quarries, where the human element is introduced, but only, as it were, in parenthesis. The little toiling figures are

slaves, not masters, of the situation. Nature still has the upper hand; Sutherland is still a landscape painter who uses man merely to give an impression of immensity and ruthlessness to his surroundings.

It was in 1946 that the crucifixions implied in Sutherland's war pictures found an even intenser expression in the Crucifixion of Our Lord, painted for St. Matthew's Church, Northampton. The tragic mood of the picture certainly owed something to Grünewald's two great Crucifixions, but whereas Grünewald did not hesitate to place the tortured Figure on the Cross in an equally tragic environment, Sutherland's Christ is removed from the world and set against a dark blue background—a symbol of universal space—broken only by a rough pattern of horizontal and vertical lines, as though space itself were assuming the cruciform rhythm of the Cross that dominates the picture.

It was at this point, soon after his first full-scale attempt at a humanistic theme, that Sutherland discovered the enchantment of Southern Europe and the warmer winds and more saturated colours that only the shores of the Mediterranean can provide. The resultant change in his art was not in the direction of gentleness or even serenity. On the contrary, the hard spikiness, the concentration on small, uncomfortable forms, intensified itself



GRAHAM
SUTHERLAND

Landscape

Water colour

Massey
Collection,
National Gallery
of Canada



GRAHAM
SUTHERLAND

Thorns

Ink and gouache

Collection:

*Mr. and Mrs. John H.
Macdonell, New York*

Opposite:

Thorn Trees

*Albright Art Gallery,
Buffalo*

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It was in the South of France that Graham Sutherland painted the portrait of Somerset Maugham which hung in the London exhibition and caused some critics to utter gloomy forebodings. This, they said in effect, was a slackening of the old visionary inspiration, a

pandering to popular taste, a mere academic portrait thinly veneered with a few of the well-known Sutherland mannerisms. I do not agree, but I shall be interested to see how it compares with his next essay in portraiture, for there certainly is danger in this genre for a romantic visionary. In the Maugham portrait there is a hieratic quality. The very shape of the canvas and the way in which the fashionably dressed, seated figure is fitted into it, suggests an ikon rather than a likeness. But not every sitter can appropriately become an ikon. The Maugham portrait is, to my mind, a surprising success. None the less Sutherland is no more a natural portrait painter than was Blake or Turner.

Plates: Courtesy, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo





GRAHAM
SUTHERLAND

Thorns

Ink and gouache

Collection:
Mr. and Mrs. John H.
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in the merciless clarity of southern air and sunlight. Grasshoppers and praying mantises become menacing armour-plated dragons. The vegetation—palms and aloes and vines—joins in the passionate, semi-tropical wood. The colour schemes change. Red becomes magenta, yellow-green becomes emerald, blacks shrink from areas into lines. The old primeval quality disappears and an age-old civilization takes its place. But the harshness is still there.

It was in the South of France that Graham Sutherland painted the portrait of Somerset Maugham which hung in the London exhibition and caused some critics to utter gloomy forebodings. This, they said in effect, was a slackening of the old visionary inspiration, a

pandering to popular taste, a mere academic portrait thinly veneered with a few of the well-known Sutherland mannerisms. I do not agree, but I shall be interested to see how it compares with his next essay in portraiture, for there certainly is danger in this genre for a romantic visionary. In the Maugham portrait there is a hieratic quality. The very shape of the canvas and the way in which the fashionably dressed, seated figure is fitted into it, suggests an ikon rather than a likeness. But not every sitter can appropriately become an ikon. The Maugham portrait is, to my mind, a surprising success. None the less Sutherland is no more a natural portrait painter than was Blake or Turner.

Plates: Courtesy, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo



H.
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ry,

Molly and Bruno Bobak

DORIS SHADBOLT



BRUNO BOBAK

Cornstalks

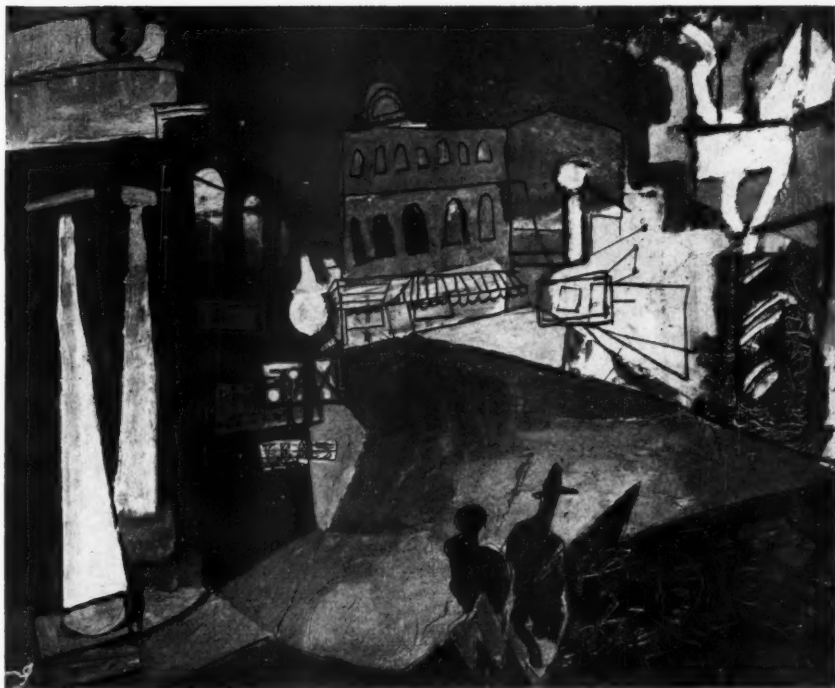
Water colour

Plate: Courtesy, Journal of the R.A.I.C.

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MOLLY BOBAK

*Nanaimo,
B.C.*



IN SPITE of their youth, both Molly Lamb and Bruno Bobak, when they were married in 1945, already had some reputation as painters: she as the always somewhat amused observer of the human scene, and he as a dexterous tonal water-colourist in the naturalistic vein. Both had been official Canadian War Artists; she was the only woman painter and he was the youngest of the men to have been so honoured. Since 1945, they have moved to the West Coast, built themselves an attractive small house, raised a child to the independent age of four, established themselves in teaching jobs (Molly as a night instructor at the Vancouver School of Art, Bruno on the day staff of the same institution) and settled into painting which promises to earn them wider critical acclaim than they ever had as youthful war artists.

There is no doubt that the presence of one has been a working stimulus to the other and yet each has maintained a consistently individual approach to painting. Essentially Molly is moved to paint what excites her for its intrinsic dramatic interest. It seems that she

has always been an interested observer of the spectacle of passing life. As a schoolgirl she was for ever writing plays and poems satirizing the characters and situations of her familiar world. The illustrated diary which she kept as a record of her experiences as a member of the W.A.A.C.'s during the war is filled with pointed observations which reveal an extraordinary alertness to the adventure inherent in almost any occurrence, if one has the objectivity to see it. Among her friends one hears such recurrent phrases as: "What's been happening to Molly this time?" Actually it is not so much that the things which happen are unique with her, but that to her they are so vivid. A shopping visit to the local grocereria, a crossing on the ferry,—merely the routine mechanics of living to anyone else—will be to her an intense experience, to be remembered, re-told, re-acted and probably painted.

Her pictures have a way of capturing the psychological essence of a situation. In *North Vancouver Ferry*, for example, the dark depressing wooden ceiling, the inevitable work-



MOLLY BOBAK

*North Vancouver
Ferry*

man with his ladder and pail replacing burned-out light bulbs (appropriately the workman's head has become a light bulb), the teetering turned-wood supports, the unfocussed waiting of the passengers in the background, and the musing introspection of the cross-legged gentleman in the foreground, create an atmosphere so true in feeling as to infect even those to whom the experience is unfamiliar.

At the same time, she possesses an intuitive feeling for the painterly qualities of her medium and a developing concern for a more architectural picture structure. Her surfaces, with their uncalculating variety of brush work, their delighted acceptance of the accidental scumbling of underpainting, are fresh and exciting. Her colour, which is never descriptive, is full of surprise; a quick glance at a group of her paintings gives a false impression of drabness, for although she uses many greyed blues, greens and browns, her

rarer yellows and reds sing with the peculiar unexpected glow of colour in the rain. But most of all she is sensible to properties which make for movement in her form,—not the direct surface movement of expressionist painting but movement which is induced in the eye of the beholder. In *The Studio*, the table, its paraphernalia of still life, the easels and drawing-boards assemble into a procession of overlapping rectangles which mount the steep ascent of the floor with all the leisurely purpose of a pack train. Her shapes are never static,—they climb, or careen, or drop, or reach across a space; her line slides or flips; a colour bursts, a texture trembles. And so it is, perhaps, that one is led back to the dramatic element in her work. For even in the still lifes, or room interiors, pictures which involve no human drama, one finds oneself reacting to the forms as though they were actors on the surface stage.

Except that his painting also rests on the apprehension of the visible world, and that he uses a traditional medium (water colour in his case) and prefers a subdued colour range,

Bruno's painting has little in common with that of his wife. By temperament he is a designer and craftsman, with all that implies of conscious taste and control. He likes tools

MOLLY BOBAK. *The Studio*

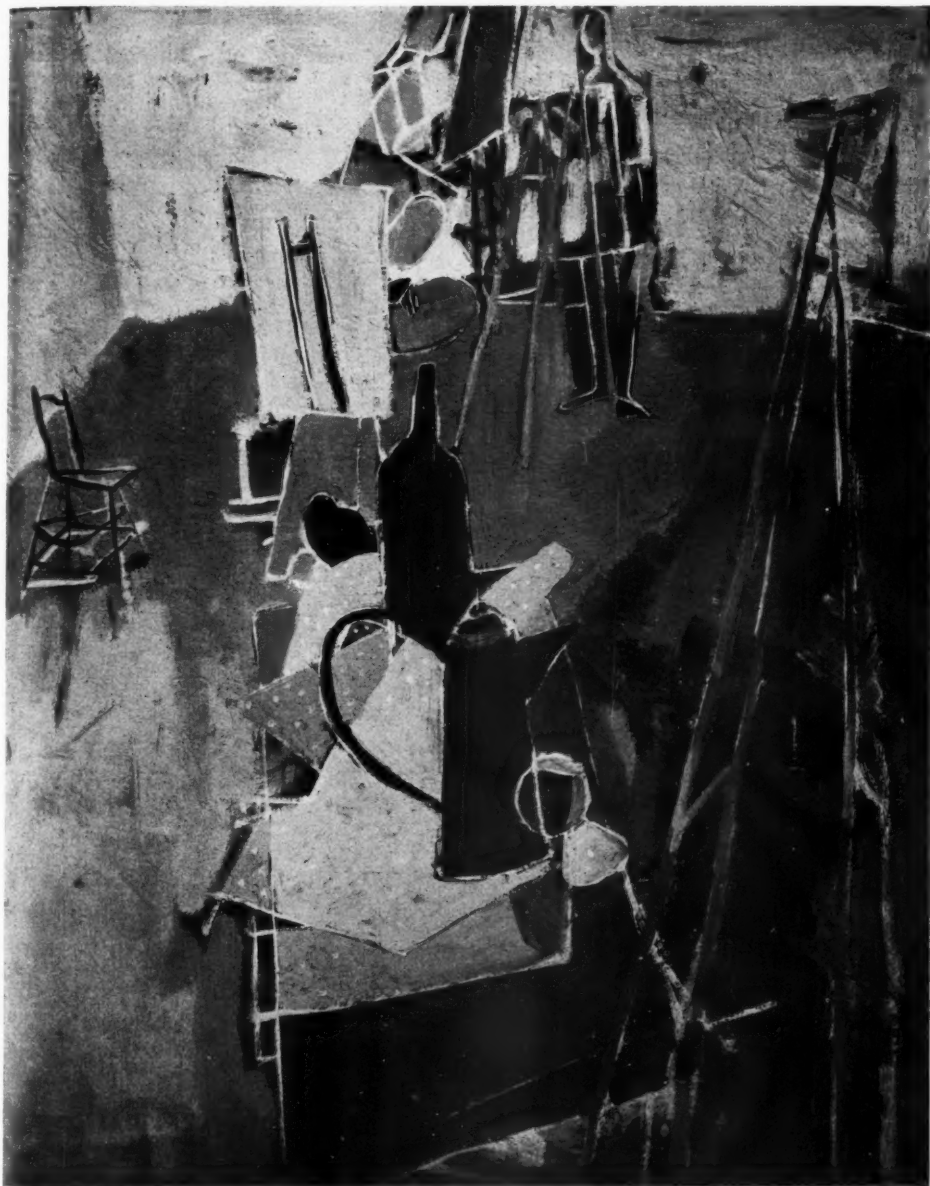


Plate: Courtesy, Journal of the R.A.I.C.

and handles them expertly; there are few crafts which he has not practised, if not with developed technique then at least with understanding for the medium,—from pottery and metal work to furniture making and textile-printing. He cuts a lino-block or wood-block masterfully and he has a good eye for a page of type. His preference is for country living and he has set his house within range of the sound of Lynn Falls in a lightly wooded, thinly populated district. He is an enthusiastic gardener and their house is always found filled with the souvenirs of his explorations into the surrounding neighbourhood: a bit of twisted wood, a jar of dried weed stalks, a berry branch, a shred of lichen or a tuft of moss.

He is a nature painter; underlying and permeating his work there is a sense of the tenderness, wonder and affection inspired in the face of nature, a fact incidentally which links him with the eighteenth century British water colourists and with more recent British painters like Paul Nash and the earlier Graham

BRUNO BOBAK. *Larvae forms and beach*
Water colour



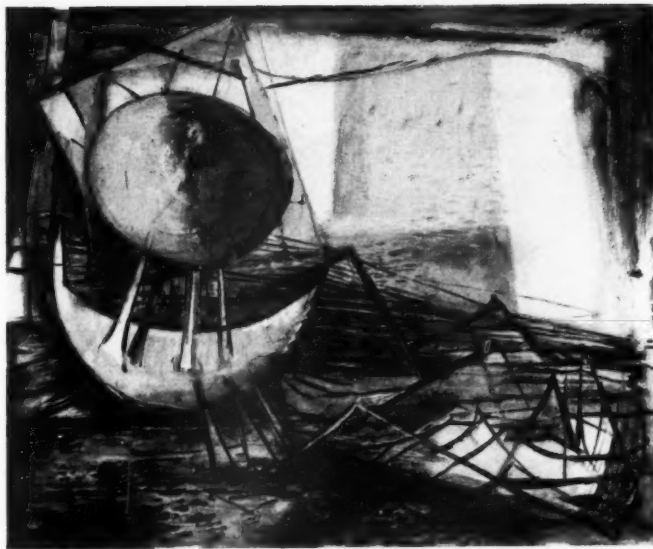
Sutherland. This initial choice of theme is not casual but involves a statement of values,—a preference for what is natural, unaffected, as against the intellectual, complex or self-interested. Each water colour commences with a fragment of nature which, already favoured by this general disposition, fascinates by its shape, its delicate patterning, its colour. His psychic affinity is for nature in her sober, quiescent and intimate moods: the fall and winter and early spring forms, the thin withdrawn shape, the crumpled and dried texture, the subtle neutral colours of forms on their return to the earth. The fragments are isolated then from their larger functional context in nature, brought close to the eye, laid out flat on the picture surface. Then, with a fine sensitivity to the character of the shapes involved and of the negative spaces between the forms, he proceeds to weave the fragment into a total fabric consisting of freely stated structural areas, held together by sympathy of shape, close colour harmony, and a tonal disposition which favours the picture plane.

A year or so ago there was a series in which the fragments, such as moss filaments or "horse tails", by a magical enlargement of scale, became the flora of fantastic landscapes. He painted a group of bird pictures also, the bird used as an emotive fragment, encircled by a protective arrangement of leaf forms perhaps, or nested into a background of rush shapes. Sometimes the fragments assume an imagist quality, as in *Thistle Forms* where a grasshopper-like creature has emerged out of the barbed seed bits. Most recently have appeared a few pictures which, in their clot-like gathering of crescent forms, supported on spindly verticals in a background of rectangular progressions, are reminiscent of Graham Sutherland, an affinity which, as an earlier one with Paul Nash, he would not deny. But whatever their particular suggestive character, his water colours are structural arrangements, satisfying in their open simplicity, restful in their colour and their preference for vertical and horizontal controls, and redolent of the intimate poetry of nature. The predominance of deep warm colour in several of the late paintings may presage a new direction; it will be interesting to watch.

Growing Pains in the Arts

JOHN C. KACERE

Discovery of America



Winnipeg last December was in the throes of growing pains in the arts. Public opinion in the city was strongly divided by a controversy over the validity of certain types of modern painting, or so anyone reading the headlines of the Free Press and the Tribune would have concluded. These screamed "A Morbid Hoax" and "Art Shocks". The occasion was an exhibition of work, some of it expressionist, some of it non-representational, by members of the staff of the School of Art, University of Manitoba.

Most of the arguments centred on the paintings of William McCloy, John Kacere and Richard Bowman. To the allegation that theirs was "the work of perverted minds", Bowman replied: "Anything new and not understood naturally creates in the observer a feeling of frustration, guilt and fear."

If the Winnipeg Art Gallery, which had embarked on a campaign to arouse more interest in art among local citizens, wanted sensational publicity, it certainly received it through this incident. But whatever the merits or demerits of the newspaper headlines, when the controversy died down, the true value of the debate was apparent. Many more Winnipeggers have begun to think about painting. No longer are cultural discussions in local intellectual circles concentrated exclusively on the merits of Canada's national ballet!

The extracts below are from a broadcast talk which William McCloy delivered over a local radio station at the height of this debate.

A QUESTION I often hear asked with considerable scepticism is: "Do modern artists see the way they paint?" To this I'd have to answer both yes and no. In general we tend to see what we are looking for or what we believe is there. This applies not just to the artist but to everyone. For example, if we are looking for someone with a red hat in a crowd we will suddenly be aware of all kinds of people with red hats where formerly, so far as our seeing was concerned, none existed. If the artist is looking for a kind of relationship that he believes is there he'll see this also. In addition, our seeing of people or experiences is seldom as simple and clear cut as photographic images of them would indicate. People are seldom really satisfied with their own photo-

graphs—because a truer picture will include more aspects of their personalities or activities. The painter today is more interested in trying to paint more fundamental experiences. . . . In addition, it has seldom been the problem of the artist to paint just what he sees in a purely unselective way. . . . If this limitation had been put on his work, as was suggested by literal minded people of the nineteenth century, there would be no pictures of angels, or Madonnas, for example, for it is certain that the artists who painted them never saw them and in the case of angels it is questionable that anyone ever saw one. It is rather the artist's function to paint, not what he has seen but . . . what can be understood or felt only through seeing. . . .

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DOMINION GALLERY

1438 SHERBROOKE STREET WEST, MONTREAL

In addition, it should be recalled that the horizons of visual experience have been tremendously extended in the last few generations. . . . today many of us . . . have passed objects at a hundred or more miles per hour, have seen universes, millions of light years away, through telescopes, have studied new aspects of reality through electronic microscopes. From such experiences new concepts of reality are bound to occur and many artists today are preoccupied with presentations of new systems of order. . . .

Another question we hear with surprising frequency is this: "Why don't modern artists paint so everyone can understand?" We have of course already answered this to some extent. However, very few ask the same question of the research chemist or the scientific philosophers who, if anything, are even more incomprehensible. It is equally inconceivable that anyone would think of asking scientists to return, for example, to the concepts of Copernicus of the sixteenth century, of Galileo of the seventeenth, or the philosophers to Leibnitz or Spinoza of the seventeenth century just because we may prefer or better understand the concepts of those times,—although to a certain extent that is what is being demanded of the artist. There are of course

large numbers of artists who do paint in more traditional ways, whose work, if not really better understood by everyone, is at least better recognized and accepted.

To understand anything usually takes a certain amount of work. We do not expect anyone to understand music, literature, the dance or any of the other arts without trying to find out something about the medium and how it works. Those who can't understand modern art, and wish to do so, must also get down to work. You will find the effort rewarding.

I should say in qualification of this that the average man probably understands more of the language of the artist than he realizes, but is a bit confused because he cannot put his reactions into words adequately. . . . But this doesn't imply that meanings are not there. Those who wish to get an understanding of art must accept it as a special form of expression, must look at pictures as pictures and not as reminders of objects to which they have already a systematized response. . . . Anything new is a challenge to our ideas and philosophies and everyone is apparently reluctant to change. But, by and large, what our contemporary artists are doing is of positive value.

WILLIAM McCLOY



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COAST TO COAST IN ART

HANNA KALI
WEYNEROWSKI

*Woman with
Chrysanthemums*

*Included in the exhibition,
"Paintings by New Canadians",
organized by the
London Public Library
and Art Museum*

Paintings by New Canadians

Knowing from experience garnered in its own community that a considerable number of artists and craftsmen of ability were to be found among recent immigrants, the London Public Library and Art Museum decided last year to organize an exhibition of "Paintings by New Canadians" and to make the collection national in scope. From almost three hundred works submitted, 106 were selected by a jury for showing in London last autumn; about half of these now compose a travelling display being presented by other galleries in Ontario and in the western provinces.

As only a few of these artists, such as Marthe Rakine, had previously been in touch with the major Canadian exhibiting societies, many names and talents new to Canada were revealed. Clair Bice, the curator of this London gallery, writes: ". . . . I know of several of the artists, represented by excellent work of quite professional standard and experience, whose daily life since coming to Canada has been preoccupied with very menial work. . . . Sometimes language

difficulties hamper them in discovering fellow artists in this country who might encourage them. Sometimes they are set down in areas of Canada where regional art facilities are limited. . . ."

Ten Montreal Collections

Once upon a time, art patronage in Montreal meant buying pictures by Bosboom, Mauve and Weissenbruch; whether they were wealthy or men of moderate means, few of the collectors had the discrimination of a van Horne.

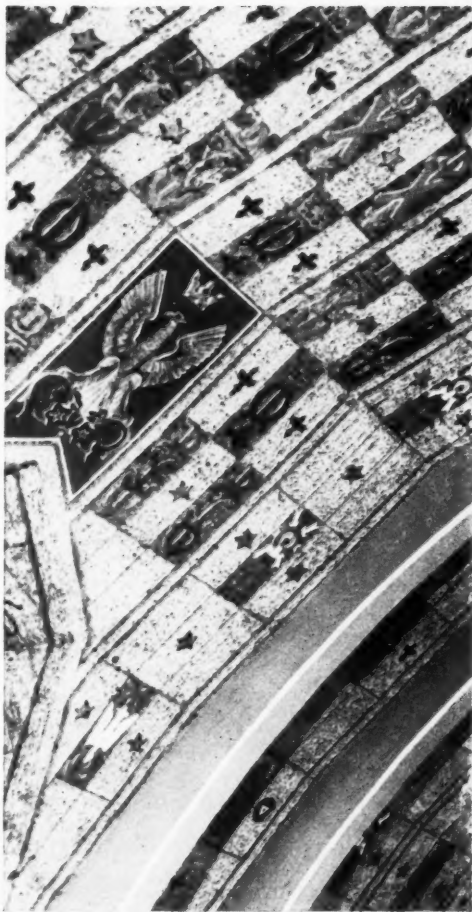
The old tradition of buying the safe and dull persists and many Montrealers still go to the auction rooms to pick up the cast-offs of Europe. But there are collectors today (mostly drawn from the professional classes rather than from the upper business brackets) who are more adventurous and more discriminating. The exhibition of treasures from ten private collections at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in February was not only one of the liveliest offerings of the season but was also a revelation of the present high quality of both Montreal painting and Montreal appreciation.

Precious objects from ancient Egypt and China were here along with modern Finnish ceramics and pottery by the Deichmanns of New Brunswick. There was a group of distinguished drawings, water colours and prints by such Europeans as Cézanne, van Gogh, Picasso, Despiau and Rodin; there were paintings by Matthew Smith, Dufy and Léger. But most remarkable in the painting section was the way in which the collectors were as faithful to the *here* as they were to the *now*. Most of the works were contemporary, most of them were by Montreal painters and most of them would have been of credit to the National Gallery of Canada, if they had been in that collection. Roberts, Pellán, Dallaire, Jori Smith, to name a few, were among the artists particularly well represented.

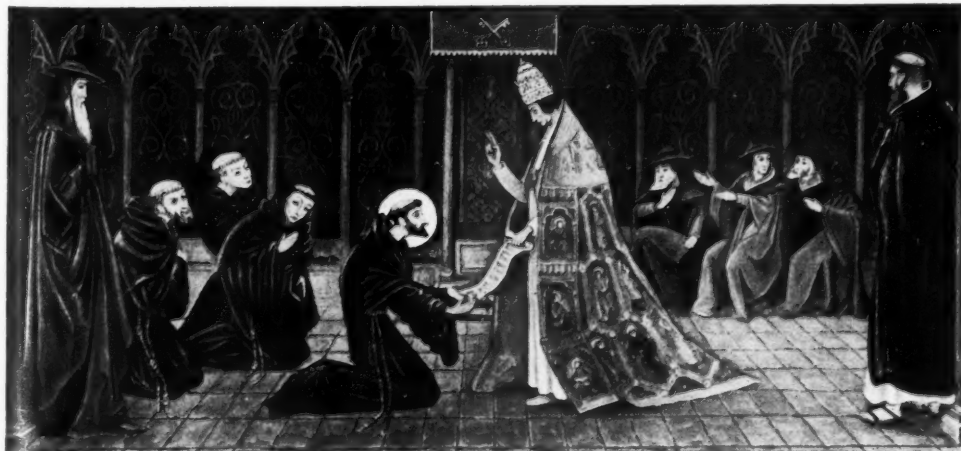
Mingling the New and Old in Religious Art

In one of the eastern quarters of Montreal, there is a fairly new stone church called Our Lady of Czestochowa. Constructed in a modified Gothic style, it seems at first glance to possess no particular architectural distinction. But, enter its portals and the building becomes at once transformed. The soaring vault, which is of concrete, has been carved in a pattern of refreshing originality, while below, by way of contrast, the walls are lined with mural paintings of a strongly mediaeval character.

These panels are by Stefan Kontski, an artist with some experience in decorating churches in Poland before coming to Canada. Some of his murals depict the life of St. Francis; others, as befits a church serving a Polish-Canadian parish, describe incidents in the history of Polish saints. But the most distinctive feature is the carving of the vault. A blow-torch was used to etch deep lines into the concrete and the resulting rough



Church of Our Lady of Czestochowa, Montreal. Above: Part of the vaulted roof with pattern carved in concrete and coloured. Below: Pope Innocent III approving the Order of St. Francis, one of the mural panels by Stefan Kontski



grooves were filled with bright colours. The designers, who were the parish priests themselves, worked out a bold rectilinear pattern, embodying religious motifs and also the Polish eagle.

**Water Colour by Aba Bayefsky
Selected for Presentation**

The Canadian Society of Painters in Water Colour recently announced that a painting to be chosen each year from its annual exhibition by the jury would be purchased by the Society for presentation to one of the public galleries. The winner of the first purchase award is Aba Bayefsky, whose yellow water colour, *The Doves*,

tosh Duff, who painted a sensitively sketched nude and a city panorama seen through a snow-fall; Stanislaw Dino Rigolo, who displayed a pale, sun-washed landscape, *Tarquimia, Etrusca*.

Awards in the Concours Artistiques 1951

The province of Quebec did honour in 1951 to its painters by granting them generous awards and by displaying the winning works ceremoniously at the Provincial Museum in Quebec City; however, later in February 1952, when they were brought to the metropolitan city of Montreal, the provincial authorities seemed to go out of their way to hide this light under a bushel, for the



JEAN DALLAIRE

*Mature morte
aux poissons*

*One of the prize
winners in the 1951
Concours Artistiques
of Quebec*

was selected by this year's jury; it will be given to the London (Ontario) Art Museum.

The general level of achievement in the Society's exhibition which opened in Toronto in February was considerably lower than in 1951. However, the showing did hold a few surprises, principally in the changing styles of a few established painters and in the work contributed by some new-comers. The work of Luke Lindoe, Jack Bush, Louis Muhlstock and Fritz Brandtner reveals a more pronounced non-objective trend. Among the non-members exhibiting, there were to be noted: Tom Hodgson, with a simply designed abstraction, *Hodge-Podge*; Ann MacIn-

paintings were shown in a relatively small and unsuitable gallery in the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales on the Place Viger where only the more intrepid spectators ventured.

The first award of \$1,500 in the Concours Artistiques went to Jean-Paul Lemieux. Others who obtained prizes were Paul-V. Beaulieu, Alfred Pellan, Jean Dallaire and Denys Morisset.

Lawrie McIntosh Wins Design Contest

For what they called "an exceedingly well thought out approach" to the problem of designing a chair made of plywood, solid wood and seamless steel tubing, the judges in the second product design competition sponsored by the

National Industrial Design Committee awarded a first prize of \$1,000 to Lawrie McIntosh of Toronto. They also gave a second prize, in the category of a writing desk suitable also for use as a serving or occasional table in a small apartment, to Charles H. Blais of Winnipeg.

The members of the jury reported that, although the level of achievement shown this time was considerably higher than in last year's competition, most entrants, nevertheless, tried too hard to obtain "original" designs at the expense of good sense. They recommended that those taking part in future contests bear in mind that simplicity of function and comfort in useful objects for the home are best served by a minimum of eccentricity.

Gift for Winnipeg Art Gallery

The Winnipeg Art Gallery has just received a most welcome gift from its president, John A. MacAulay, of three important paintings, each by a prominent Canadian artist and each expressing an entirely different aspect of Canadian art. Of these three works, the director of the gallery, Alvin C. Eastman, writes:

"Lawren Harris's *Agawa River, Algoma* is not one of open landscape, but rather a cheerful rendering of the deep northern forest in autumn. The arrangement is highly decorative and simplified and borders on a geometric pattern.

"James Wilson Morrice's *Scene in Trinidad*, painted around 1919, of the rolling country of this lovely island, is decidedly personal. Its modernity makes it appear to have been painted but a few years ago. This . . . landscape is a

symphony in greens. Two larger trees, their foliage suggested by masses of green, stand halfway along the cart road, defining the distances and the background. This is practically all there is of subject matter in the picture and yet it is just this simple presentation of the scene which makes the picture so effective.

"Like Morrice, Emily Carr saw nature from a subjective point of view; her response to the Canadian scene seems more emotional, spontaneous and vital than that of nearly any other Canadian artist. Her painting, *Cove*, which is the third item in the MacAulay gift, shows firmly rounded grassy hills dropping steeply to a small half-moon beach below, against which an intensely blue sea washes upon a short coast line fringed with white-caps. Its rich colour scale, the firm yet almost breathing quality of the grassy slopes tumbling to the waves, the energetic movement with which the artist invests land, sea and sky, all unite to make this painting striking and powerful."

Exhibitions of the Work of Art Directors

The first annual exhibition of advertising art and illustration sponsored by the newly formed Art Directors Club of Montreal and the fourth by the Toronto club are running almost concurrently, in Montreal from March 15 to 29 and in Toronto from April 9 to 20.

This magazine will publish a review of both exhibitions in its next issue, to mark the coming of age of this organized movement for better commercial art in Canada.

J. W. MORRICE

Scene in Trinidad

Recently presented
to the Winnipeg Art
Gallery by
John A. MacAulay



THE FEDERATION OF CANADIAN ARTISTS

invites artists and interested laymen to join.

For the sake of
ART IN CANADA

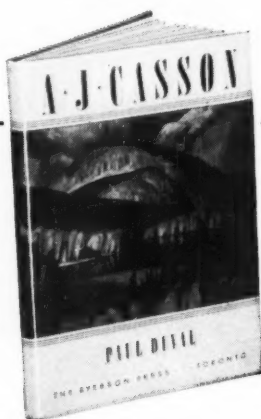
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A. J. CASSON

By Paul Duval. A biography with 37 illustrations, 4 colour plates. Foreword by Dr. B. K. Sandwell. \$4.00.

A BACKGROUND FOR BEAUTY

By Arnold Silcock. An important account of art development by an expert. 76 illustrations, 8 colour plates. \$12.00.

The Ryerson Press, Toronto

THE ART FORUM

Dear Sir:

After a three week visit to the galleries of Los Angeles, one of my first jobs on returning to the gallery at the University of British Columbia was to hang the travelling exhibition of the Canadian Group of Painters.

Probably no one will thank me for my gratuitous comments on Canadian art, but the slight objectivity gained on vacation found me provoked into a particularly vicious mood by the low calibre of this show.

Frankly it is just not good enough; not at all. This is the annual exhibition of a group which should contain the best we have in Canada. The public has a right to expect that each artist will contribute a major work, if indeed he has produced one in the preceding year. Scarcely a third of the paintings in this show qualify as such and far too many of them suggest the casual product of a Sunday afternoon.

Of the thirty-seven painters represented there are perhaps a round ten whose work displays a painterly proficiency. (Among these I would include B. C. Binning, Fritz Brandtner, Cosgrove, E. J. Hughes, J. L. Shadbolt, William Winter and Hawley Yarwood.) And even here in this select group we over-value competency because of its premium, even when relatively few intense or subtle experiences are conveyed.

The bulk of the remainder are trivial in conception and inadequate in execution. They range from the slick formulae of Bieler and Comfort, through student-level works of Schaefer, Muhlstock and Humphrey, stiffly contrived modernities of Edwy Cooke, R. K. Courtice, and Marian Scott, to the utter boredom department of Kathleen Morris and Edwin Holgate, down to a smattering of work like Ethel Seath's *Shell Rhythms* which is so hopelessly disorganized one wonders how it got past a jury.

We see too little of the work of eastern artists to categorize from this basis. It is difficult to know how much the exhibition has suffered from culling and substitution for travelling purposes. If the original exhibition had a standard it is the responsibility of the National Gallery to maintain it in the selection they send out on the road. If there are some artists whose work is generally better than here indicated, then they are not exempt from criticism, but the more specifically it is directed at them for their needless contribution to the general disgrace.

Yours truly,
RENÉ D. F. BOUX,
Curator, The University Art Galleries,
University of British Columbia.

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Artist's Cabin. Baie St. Paul, P.Q. Accommodation for two, \$12.50 weekly. For further information write Peter Douet, Baie St. Paul, P.Q. Before May, write to 315 Ehn Ave., Westmount, P.Q.

Art in the Soviet Union

Dear Sir:

May I comment on a few points in Mr. Taylor's article on the Soviet Union?

Mr. Taylor is not quite right in thinking he is the only Canadian artist to have visited that country in the last fifteen years because I was there for two years during the war. At the different Naval and Military Missions, etc., in Russia then there were several hundred persons, but I met only one artist who was English.

One should not perhaps in any country be too much impressed by the scale of living of the President of its Academy. They have a very good subway in Moscow—does he really need two cars and a chauffeur? What is his painting like? Gerasimov has produced some of the dullest official portraits of our time. It was supposed to be Gerasimov who was responsible for having the Museum of Western Art in Moscow closed—the museum which houses an outstanding collection of modern French pictures.

It is true that Soviet artists have a favoured position in their society, but some of them reap very modest rewards. There were two or three artists employed at the Red Navy Club in the small Arctic port where we were. They only held the rank of petty officer in the Navy. They were competent artists. They spent full working days in copying famous Russian pictures of the nineteenth century and in arranging displays in the club for different celebrations. Some evenings they had a sketching group which I joined.

As Mr. Taylor says, there is tremendous interest in the arts in Russia. Even during the war, Russians who saw my work seemed genuinely interested and never showed any signs of alarm or suspicion because there was a foreign artist in their midst. All the same it was unwise to try sketching out of doors. The police always came much too soon.

Yours truly,
JULIUS GRIFFITH,
Toronto.

Dear Sir:

Several members of the Sculptors Society have drawn my attention to a letter by Mr. Fred Taylor in your recent issue, with the thought that some readers might have a false impression of the activities of this Society from his report that he saw collections of photographs of sculpture "presented" by the Sculptors Society of Canada in the VOKS Building in Moscow.

The Sculptors Society has no special interest in relations with any one foreign country. It facilitates the exhibition of Canadian sculpture at home and abroad, in accordance with its charter. During the war years, when shipping conditions made travelling exhibitions of sculpture impractical, even within Canada, the Sculptors Society supplied large photographic prints to any institution which requested them and which paid expenses, such as printing, mounts, lettering, packing and express charges.

The photographs to which Mr. Taylor refers are probably a collection acquired by the Canadian-

Soviet Friendship Society in Toronto about ten years ago. This is the first news we have had of their having arrived at any other place. Other organizations accommodated in this way were the National Gallery of Canada and the International Students Service, both of which circulated similar collections in various countries of Western Europe, and the University of Toronto, which exhibited them here.

Yours truly,
ELIZABETH WYN WOOD,
President, Sculptors Society of Canada.

Dear Sir:

Thank you for the very interesting article by Frederick Taylor on the economic status of the artist in Russia. I could, however, find nothing about art in it—least of all in the illustrations.

Mr. Taylor has all the hall-marks of a typical apologist for the Soviet Union. When he wants to convince us, he falls back on the usual resource of explaining that really it isn't a communist regime at all. The artist owns several houses, cars and a chauffeur (no one can take them away from me)—it sounds like a child shouting against his fears.

I would bet Mr. Taylor a rouble that Gerasimov would very soon lose the lot if he ceased to paint his "large historical subjects" in his large studio with his presumably large brushes.

Yours truly,
J. A. MORRIS,
Curator, Vancouver Art Gallery.

Our Covers—Good or Bad?

Dear Sir:

How refreshing to see the pleasant, colourful covers that have recently appeared on *Canadian Art*! They are a happy reflection of that progressive minority that contributes so much to Canada's spiritual health, in spite of the most discouraging odds.

Another cheering note is the increasing space devoted to matters of good taste in objects of everyday use. Perhaps it will sink in that culture means a way of life, not merely a rectilinear blob on the wall.

Yours truly,
JAMES WARREN,
Toronto.

Dear Sir:

As I look at this "get-up" which I have before me, namely the cover of your December issue, I can only shake my head in bewilderment and deplore the pathetic lack of good designs on your covers.

Anybody that would put such a conglomeration as that on a cover must be very hard up for designs.

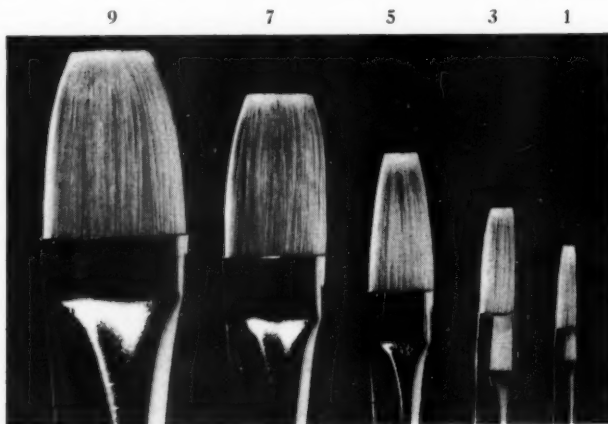
Yours truly,
ARNOLD MEYERS,
Trenton, Ontario.

Dear Sir:

... I really think that a reproduction of Jackson, Thomson, MacDonald, Lisner, Carr, Harris, Gagnon, etc., on your cover would be far superior and more acceptable...

Yours truly,
TOM McHUGH,
Bowmanville, Ontario.

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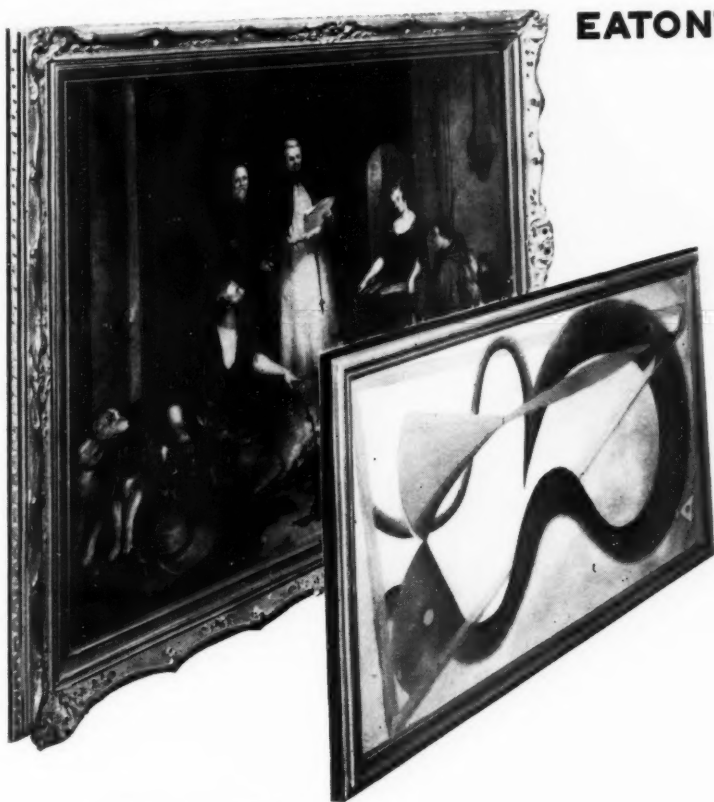
CONTRIBUTORS

L. A. C. Panton is principal of the Ontario College of Art, Toronto.

Wynona Mulcaster teaches art education at the Normal School, Saskatoon; last year she was invited to speak at a conference on art education held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

James A. Houston, whose home is in Grand Mère, Quebec, has now made five trips to the eastern Arctic; he not only collects Eskimo sculpture and crafts but he also hopes to develop new methods of education for the Eskimo based on their love and understanding of these arts.

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